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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 001778

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/31/2017
TAGS: [OSCE](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BE](#)
SUBJECT: BELGIUM: REACTION TO PROPOSED RUSSIAN DRAFT OF AN
OSCE CHARTER

REF: STATE 69698

Classified By: POLCOUNS TED ANDREWS. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Poloff spoke with Thierry Vuylsteke, Director of the MFA's OSCE office. Vuylsteke said Belgium did not see the need for an OSCE charter, since the OSCE works well with its existing institutions and within its current framework. He said the idea was raised but did not come to fruition at the December 2006 OSCE Ministerial.

¶2. (C) Vuylsteke, however, felt OSCE members needed to be "realistic" about Russia and its continued efforts at OSCE reform. He said at the end of Belgium's 2006 OSCE chairmanship, Belgium put the brakes on the concept of OSCE reform. Russia, however, "never gives up" and therefore needs to be "kept on board." Its ongoing push to reform the OSCE put constant pressure on the organization's flagship programs, such as election monitoring, and its influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia was still significant. Keeping Russia "on board" might mean at least evaluating its proposals, including for an OSCE charter. Vuylsteke said Belgium was listening but not promoting the idea.

¶3. (C) Comment: Vuylsteke is echoing Belgian sentiment expressed throughout its 2006 OSCE chairmanship on the need to hear from all strains of opinion within the OSCE. However, Belgium's discomfort with Russian intentions and actions, developed during Belgium's OSCE tenure, has only deepened in the past few months. The Belgians are always searching for ways to "deal with Russia." Vuylsteke's "listen but do not support" message reflects Belgium's current approach of seeking engagement with Moscow without backtracking on positions.

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